

MASONRY IN MANITOBA

Published by Authority of Grand Lodge

VOL. 4

MARCH, 1948

No. 3

TO THE YOUNG INITIATE

You are now an active member of your Mother lodge, but at the same time you should realize that this membership brings you into union with the whole Masonic Craft wheresoever it meets. The realization of this fact must broaden your outlook and prompt many questions in your mind.

We want you to understand that Freemasonry has passed through every phase of human development, industrial, educational, and religious. It has passed out of the operative stage of its evolutionary growth. It is no longer engaged in formulating rules and regulations by which the Apprentice is bound to seven years of grinding toil. It has reached the Master's Degree of its unfoldment.

It places in the hands of the initiate of his generation the key to the great enigma of existence. It puts him in touch, as it were, with the Great Cause of all that is. It teaches him to think for himself, to stand and walk alone, his feet guided by the Squares of Truth and Justice.

It encourages him to map out his own pathway to the stars. The justification of Freemasonry is its far reaching constructive effect on the lives of men.

It takes the low ideals and renovates and changes them into high and noble concepts of beauty; making them over into laws of conduct. The man who has come into full fellowship in our Masonic Craft, finds his feebleness overlaid with strength, his purposeless instincts transmuted into moral direction, with the upward goal ever in view. Freemasonry is truly worthy of a man's greatest loyalty.

If life means anything at all to the human soul it means struggle, unceasing spiritual combat, an ever present consciousness that he is battling with powers of evil and darkness, and ever desiring the victory that the light of truth may illumine the farthest recesses of this transitory life.

He works ever toward perfection, feeling all the time that the discords and failures of earth will resolve into the accordant successes of the "infinite beyond." He looks about and sees the apparent elevation of the false over the true, the superficial and foolish above the earnest and wise. But Freemasonry corrects any false illusions.

Freemasonry opens the gates of a kingdom of heaven on earth, righteousness of living, freedom of thought, liberty of action, and says to those who have sought the light: "Enter thou!

Here shalt thou have hours of silver solitude. Here shall music sound for thee, such as thou hast never before heard. Here shall fountains play and flowers grow."

Looking forward to that universal Brotherhood of Man so ardently hoped for by all true souls; when arbitration shall supersede war, when toleration and justice shall be the rule not the exception, when the people shall govern, Freemasons will be found "among those who lead the advance survey of the ground, clear away obstructions and send back reports of safety, faith and cheer; and presently the main body of humanity will move forward to occupy the positions they have won.

"Such is the mission of the reformers among whom they are numbered. But when the grand army has come up to where they stand, they may not rest on their arms; there are new foes to fight, new victories to be won, new truths to be discovered."

While these thoughts are directed to the new member it is not amiss that some who are old in the Craft might reflect upon the message contained in this brief summary.

We do need men to think things out for themselves in these days of man's regimentation. Your lodge needs thinking members and the state certainly will benefit when the citizenry at large is imbued with the Spirit of Freemasonry.

PARCELS FOR BRITAIN

Each month three hundred packages of food leave Manitoba for our needy brethren overseas. These are sent in the name of a member and each successive mail brings back the sincere acknowledgments of those who have received our gifts.

What a story will be contained in our files when all the letters of appreciation are gathered together. What a practical expression of Freemasonry lies behind the sending of each individual parcel.

As we write this paragraph we learn that over seventeen thousand dollars has been contributed by the membership. All of our lodges have not responded, some have yet to send their initial report and remittance.

The appeal went out nearly six months ago and it is not asking too much at this time when we say, why have we had no report from some of our constituent lodges? If any brother reading these words has not yet made a contribution—has not yet been contacted by his lodge to do so, perhaps he will now send his offering to his lodge secretary who in turn will forward the remittance to our Grand Secretary.

Perhaps we should add that this is a continuing effort. Food supplies in the Old Land show no improvement to what prevailed when we decided to inaugurate this good work, and having commenced our plan of assistance we should each, individually, do our part in contributing what we can from time to time.

MASONIC WORDS

There are several words used by Freemasons which peculiarly belong to the Craft—others occurring in the ceremonies are not exclusively Masonic, but have a certain significance to us. From time to time we will reprint material on the subject and herein we quote the following:

Due Guard. "A mode of recognition which derives its name from its object, which is to duly guard the person using it in reference to his obligations, and the penalty for their violation. The Due Guard is an Americanism, and of comparatively recent origin, being unknown to the English and Continental systems. In some of the old rituals of 1757 the expression is used, but only as referring to what is now the sign. One explanation is that the word is coined from the French expression, "Dieu me garde—God protect me."

Ne Varietur. These words appear on every Master Mason's certificate. Many brethren wonder what they mean. They are Latin words, meaning "lest it should be changed."

It is Masonic usage to require a brother, when he receives a certificate from his lodge, to affix his name in the marginal space as a protection. By your signature you can be identified when occasion requires.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

A few days ago there reached my desk a reprinted document issued by The Masonic Service Association, Washington, D.C. The title of the brochure is "A Grand Lodge Home Again After the War."

This interesting publication contains a brief review of the history and status of Freemasonry in that part of war torn Europe.

The contents tell of the first Communication of the National Grand Lodge of Czechoslovakia in the liberated country after the second World War. We learn that the brethren of that country claim a Masonic history founded in the City of Prague back in the fourteenth century, and it is interesting to learn that the librarian of the University at Prague discovered an old charter of that far-off time.

We are told about the then Emperor attacking Freemasonry in 1792 and that news and information of the Craft is rarely heard of after 1800.

There was a revival for a short time in 1848 when a wave of freedom reigned. This, however, was of short duration and the efforts of the brethren were soon frustrated, because the government insisted that police commissioners should attend all lodges during the period of work. Later the Emperor Franz Joseph proscribed Freemasonry.

In the month of October 1918, just prior to the signing of the Armistice following World War I, the first Czech National Lodge in Prague was formed. In December 1918 the National Grand Lodge of Czechoslovakia was organized—this was re-formed in February 1923. It grew slowly and steadily and great care was exercised in the admission of members.

After Munich the police again appeared on the scene and intimidated, on official authority, that Grand Lodge must cease to exist. A protocol was presented to the officers of Grand Lodge demanding, "either sign or take the consequences."

Then as history relates, Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia in March 1939, six months before World War II was declared. Of the total pre-war members, we are told, 34 percent were confined to prison or concentration camp and 17 percent tortured to death. The number of Czech brethren who succeeded in reaching other countries to escape Nazi persecution is estimated at 200 all told. They carried the Light of Masonry in their hearts, but filled with grief, because their lodges and temples at home had been desecrated or destroyed.

Small groups met in France, others in the United States but the greater number found refuge in England. This latter group was augmented by brethren from Paris after the collapse of France in 1940. Relations were entered into with the Grand Lodge of England and in 1941 brethren representing 12 Czech lodges under the jurisdiction of the National Grand Lodge met and elected a Grand Master in Exile. A lodge under these auspices was established in London.

This peculiar situation was recognized by the Grand Lodge of England who accepted and recognized for the period of exile the accredited representative of the National Grand Lodge of Czechoslovakia.

On 16th October, 1947, a Communication of the National Grand Lodge was held in Prague. A Grand Master was elected and reports received. They likewise elected officers for the several positions in accordance with Masonic custom.

The Grand Lodge is now re-established in its own country, where, to quote from the report, "in the heart of Europe, in 1348, just 600 years ago the first central university was founded; where John Huss was the first to prepare the way for the liberty of conscience; where his followers gave the nation the watchword, "Truth Prevails"; where Johann Amos Comenius laid the foundation of modern education; where T. G. Masaryk gave the magnificent example of world democracy, and Edward Benes, the example of unshakable belief in humanity and peace. Here the Masters of the Royal Art take up their tools, being called back to labor."

BANFF CONFERENCE

The mimeographed proceedings of the seventh annual gathering have been issued and distributed. A copy has been mailed to every Secretary in the jurisdiction and is therefore available to the members. If you are interested then borrow the copy sent for the use of you and your fellow members.

This is quite a volume, it consists of 77 folio pages single spaced typewritten matter and every address, and most of the comment and discussion, appears between the covers.

The contributions made by the representatives from the Grand Lodge of Manitoba reflect great credit to our jurisdiction, and doubtless will be read by many members with a great deal of interest because they are the product of somebody we know.

Personally we still think the whole program was overloaded—or rather that too much was undertaken for the time available. It would seem that much benefit would result from a more extended discussion of the topics introduced by the main speaker. This would reduce the number of subjects but on the whole it would focus attention on the smaller program.

The proceedings are well worth reading and the officers of our lodges ought to make sure that they read and study the contents contained in the report.

WEARING THE APRON

The question has been asked, "should a Freemason wear his apron outside his coat or underneath"?

We are all conscious of the fact that some members wear it one way, others seem to have a preference for the contrary. There is certainly a lack of uniformity.

In almost every lodge in Manitoba the custom is to conceal the apron by fastening it underneath the coat. Often one is at a loss to know whether a brother is properly clothed when he enters a lodge—his apron being hidden by his coat.

I have sought in vain for a definite pronouncement on this subject. The only reference I have located gives no direction because it merely says, "the apron is usually tied around the waist."

An examination of our literature and a study of our ceremonies will disclose that in operative days a craftsman wore his apron to protect his garment from spot and stain.

Our own knowledge and experience of that rapidly disappearing artisan, the stone-mason, indicates that in the course of their daily tasks these men wore their aprons in a manner which prevented dust and dirt from soiling their ordinary garments—certainly we cannot recall one of our stone-mason friends ever having his apron in a semi-hidden position while at work.

Outside our own jurisdiction, particularly in Great Britain and the United States, the apron of a Speculative Freemason is invariably worn outside his coat. As a matter of fact it is a breach of Procedure (or proper dress) to do otherwise in certain Grand Jurisdictions.

Here in Manitoba the manner of wearing the apron seems to be a matter of individual choice and we have no specific directive to guide us.

Personally, I think the apron should be fully exposed and worn outside the coat.

AREA MEETINGS

Preliminary arrangements are under way, and tentative plans of the Committee suggest as meeting places for 1948, Souris, Gladstone and Pilot Mound. Of course a great deal depends upon the attitude of the local lodges. These points are excellently situated for the purpose of Area Meetings and it is our opinion that very successful results will follow if the present plans are finally accepted.

Brethren in the vicinity of the towns named will wait with eagerness for our definite announcement which it is hoped will appear in our next issue.

FOUND—A PARKER PEN

In the lodge room of Norwood Lodge on the morning following the regular meeting of that lodge, held 12th January. The owner may recover his lost property by getting in touch with the Secretary of Norwood Lodge.